**Let’s Go for the (Nutritional) Gold** *By Kevin Huffman*

Watching Shaun White drop into the halfpipe at the Vancouver Games, it's easy to forget that America is the most sedentary nation on Earth. The Daily Beast this week released the results of the Couch Potato Olympics, analyzing statistics for 24 industrialized nations in calories consumed, television watched, aversion to playing sports (yes, there are data on that) and Internet use. Congratulations, compatriots: We took home the gold!

And while Americans are most likely to celebrate White's Double McTwist 1260 with a double quarter-pounder with cheese, we're also excellent candidates for the Olympic committee's promotion: "Follow us on Twitter and you might win a cool video game!"

In this context, you'd think it would be hard to complain about Michelle Obama's childhood obesity campaign. The "Let's Move" initiative aims to improve access to healthful food and to encourage exercise. It's a good project for the first lady. She has the bully pulpit to make a difference, and it allows her to show off her guns on a regular basis — kapow!

But if there is anything that upsets right-wingers more than Michelle Obama, it's people messing with our right to live the fat life. Combine the two, and it's on.

Michelle Malkin accused the first lady of "playing the national security card" by pointing out that one-third of our military's potential recruits are too fat and out of shape to qualify. (You can imagine how appalled Malkin must have been, since Republicans are so cautious with the national security card.)

Glenn Beck weighed in, too: "This is torn from the pages of the progressive playbook. You're too stupid. You need the government to fix your life ... They're coming and they are slowly but surely taking away your freedom under the guise of helping you."

Sorry, guys, but someone needs to spell it out: Our kids don't eat well, they don't exercise and, just like their parents, they're getting fat. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a deeply troubling digital map showing the fattening of America over the past 25 years. You can watch the country chunk up state by state as the map flashes annually from 1985 to the present. Looking at the map, I felt the same foreboding sense I had watching tech stocks 10 years ago and housing prices five years ago. This is a human bubble. It can't be sustained. And when it pops, it's going to be ugly. We're quite literally whistling past the graveyard.

The first lady's initiative isn't going to wash away past excesses, but she's shining a spotlight on a critical issue and taking some important steps. As a parent of school-age children, I can join the amen chorus when Obama calls for more nutritious school meals, comprehensible food labels, helpful tips from pediatricians and changing the 1950s-era presidential physical fitness standards. (As long as they don't give up the rope climb. How many times in life have we all been grateful for the hard-earned lessons of the rope climb?)

Still, it's worth pausing to feel just a little sad that this is where we are as a country. This is least-common-denominator stuff, and we should all be disturbed that we need a White House initiative for basic health habits, that our aspiration is to do the obvious. Put down the Doritos. Eat more fruits and vegetables. Get off the couch. America may not be able to create "green" jobs or provide health insurance to poor people, but doggone it, we can make sure we don't have to roll our kids to school.

Beck's response typifies the childlike populist pushback to any effort to tell an unfortunate truth, particularly if resolving the problem involves a modicum of discomfort. We don't want to hear about global warming, especially if we have to give up the super-sized SUV. We don't want to hear about health-care costs — we should be able to gorge on the diminishing returns of endless medical tests. And if the first lady wants us to eat more healthful food and hit the gym, she should mind her own beeswax. We pass on the costs and the girth to our kids and hope it will somehow all just work out.

We're a week into the Olympics and the United States is hanging tough at the top of the medal

standings. Our best athletes are clutch, and a little global butt-kicking is good for the national soul. Even better, though, would be a sustained commitment to building a healthier country, a nation with a little less watching and a little more doing.